Rethinking Fat Studies and Activism in Women's and Gender Studies Textbooks

Fatspiration, "Thin Saviours," and Sexist Beauty Culture

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This paper surveys women's and gender studies textbook inclusions on fatness. It highlights the framing, focus areas, and content to develop a discussion of the scholarly and political tensions between fat activists and fat studies scholars, and feminist politics and scholarship. Specifically, the article critiques the subsumption of fat within critiques of beauty culture, the use of extractive narratives, and healthism. The article suggests ways of including critical fat scholarship and activist writing that is intersectional.

My work in fat activism and fat studies has grown primarily over the last ten years while pursuing an academic career in philosophy and women's and gender studies. As I began to introduce critical fat studies and activist literature into my courses and research, I encountered political, conceptual, and discursive tensions that highlighted departures and divisions in pedagogical and scholarly approaches between feminist and fat politics. This is not surprising since there are important differences in lived experiences of material embodiment and other positionalities that must be explored. In this article, I pursue one dimension of these political and scholarly tensions by turning to what introductory edited textbooks in (primarily Canadian) Women's and Gender Studies (WGS) tell us about the terms of inclusion of critical work on fat for entering into some feminist scholarly discussions. While I analyze what is included in WGS textbooks in particular, significant questions remain about whether fat registers as a (significant) social justice issue for WGS courses and other professional practice activities. The critical standard I use for this project is to consider whether there is an unconditional acceptance and valuing of fat bodies—regardless of their normative health or beauty status—as well as centring fat as a bodily marker for oppression that is not subsumed into gender. An analysis of textbooks tells us that primarily, readings in Women's and Gender Studies textbooks are not being chosen to include a fat positive politics, a critical fat studies perspective, or a lived materiality of a fat body. My sense from both teaching and researching at this intersection is that the general feminist claim that women ought to feel less bad about their bodies has significant underlying assumptions. I provide a contrast to readings that are available for teaching that address these gaps and demonstrate the intersectional anti-oppression angles to this issue.

Methodology

The survey of textbook inclusions must consider the temporality of textbook publishing. Scholarly and activist discourses change over time, and textbook publishing is slow work. In addition, the labour that goes into selecting and curating volumes is often done off the side of one's desk to little or no additional financial gain. Despite these limitations, this particular portion of feminist print culture is informative about the ways in which feminist politics has come in tension with fat positivity within and outside of the academy. Most of the textbooks I found are still in print and in use in some form or edition. I was unable to find relevant material in any single-authored texts. I also touch on some uses of "digital reading rooms," which allow for individual instructor curation of resources. This survey is not inclusive

of *curricula*–that is, it does not take into account how articles are framed, supplemented, or contextualized in classrooms. My methodology has a significant limitation in that I do not engage with texts that exclude discussions of body size or fat. This means my sample leans towards volumes that do include something on size. And, there's no emergent sense of percentage of representation in these inclusions and exclusions. In other words, this review provides a pre-study rather than a methodological approach, focusing on what was available to search. Hoskin (2017) provides a methodological survey of WGS textbooks, concentrating on how femininity is treated in feminist theory texts (5–6). However, because femininity is historically a more central feminist concept, this topic is more pervasive and amenable to a structured analysis. Though my study is narrow (attending to fat activist and scholarly literature), there would be enough material if a study was devised to include discussions of the body in general.

Health, Beauty, and Feminist Agency

WGS edited textbooks contain multi-genre works, including activist writing, lived experiences, poetry, and scholarly articles that are theoretical and empirical. Most texts include a section on beauty culture and if pieces on fat are included, they are primarily included there. It is notable that articles critical of dominant understandings of size could just as easily be included in areas on health, pregnancy, sexuality, violence, and others, given the range of fat studies scholarship and activist and creative writing in all these areas. Including fatness primarily in discussions of beauty culture tells us something about the discourses undergirding editorial decisions—that is, that scholars interpret fat as primarily about women's *looks*, even though fat lived experiences of oppression intersect so many other structural and material oppressions (healthcare, education, disability, careers, racialized violence, etc.). This is true too, of some of the popular and scholarly origins of critiques of restrictive beauty norms within feminism (predominantly arising out of citational chains in the 1990s leading back to *The Beauty Myth* (Wolf 1990); *Unbearable Weight* (Bordo 1993), *The Body Project* (Brumberg 1988), and others. Decades later, discussions of beauty in feminism are often framed by what Talia Welsh identifies as the "good health imperative" in feminism:

> [The feminist] ability to reject the demonization of fat in one context and to accept fat's negative status in another is based in the idea that one view of fat (the bad one) arises from sexism and that the other (the good one) arises from a concern about health. It is wrong to equate a woman's value with her looks, but it is acceptable to encourage that same woman to lose weight if it would augment her health (33).

When scholars centre their analyses on fat primarily or exclusively within limited feminist discussions of beauty culture (and not healthcare, violence, education, disability, careers, racialized violence, etc.) they contribute to the discourse that fat shaming is *wrong only or predominantly when it arises from sexism*. This research reinforces the notion that fatphobia is sexism extended rather than its own axis of oppression. By centring beauty in discussions of fatphobia, concrete histories and discriminations are left untouched and thus preserve the "good health imperative." This is also apparent in the pervasive framing of discussions of size with articles on eating disorders and cosmetic surgery, which affect people of all sizes. While it is important to underline the harms associated with overly restrictive beauty ideals, this frames discussions of body size within feminism as centrally about the harms from the *obsession* with being thin and pressure to be attractive (which again, affects people of all sizes and elides a lived embodiment of fatness). As some of the textbook inclusions demonstrate, this locates the harms of fatphobia in the *mind*—how we *feel and think* about our bodies (regardless of size or appearance). This narrative is confirmed by the widespread teaching of the "Killing Me Softly" (1979–2010) resources as well as "MissRepresentation" (2011), both of which promote the analysis that the masculinist corporate advertising industry is body shaming women into eating disorders, and the answer is greater awareness. These films, like textbooks, exclude fat voices and bodies from the radical potential for liberatory politics based in an analysis of body size. When fat people speak about experiences of fat phobia, it is common to hear from slender folks that we are "just thinking negatively" and need to be more body positive about ourselves.

One of the oldest pieces I found was a clear-cut example of the "good health imperative" in feminism. *An Introduction to Women's Studies: Gender in a Transnational World* (Grewal and Kaplan, 2006) includes a piece by Nancy Worcester (a nutrition researcher) entitled "The Obesity of the Food Industry" in a section entitled "Global Food Production and Consumption." Worcester also has a piece in the "Beauty Culture" section entitled "Nourishing Ourselves." Both of Worcester's articles cite sources primarily from the mid to late 1970s and early 1980s. "The Obesity of the Food Industry" articulates specifically *feminist* reasons to fight the "obesity" epidemic. While the piece raises some important objections to capitalist profit motive and big business in food production systems, the piece gives *feminist* reasons

to eat an unprocessed low-fat diet and maintain a "good body weight" (Worcester 493). This type of nutritionally focused feminism is reminiscent of first wave feminisms such as Charlotte Perkins Gillman's *Women and Economics* ([1898] 1997), in which she argues that women need to stop feeding their families for pleasure ("cupid-in-the-kitchen"), but rather to use *science* in nutrition "to the vast improvement in health and happiness of the human race" (Perkins Gilman 119). While Perkins Gilman is arguing to divorce "sex roles" from cooking, arguing that nutrition should be industrialized and professionalized, contemporary feminist food politics, like Worcesters's critiques industrial capitalist food production, but offers retrograde solutions, romanticizing cooking, the family, and an imagined white farm life (Hall 180) when she suggests individual women should cook local, healthy meals from scratch. Kim Hall (2014) has further contextualized these claims as "alimentary ableism," whereby eating a particular diet is prescribed to prevent or cure disability, within which "obesity" would qualify. Given the feminization of cooking and eating disorders, alimentary ableism is an important check point for feminist politics more broadly.

Anna Kirkland (2011) has schematized feminist arguments of the kind typified by Worcester as an "environmental approach to obesity." These arguments appear anti-oppressive and humanistic, since on the surface they take the blame off people who are disadvantaged systemically, however these arguments "reproduce[…] a persistent tension in feminist approaches to social problems: well-meant efforts to improve poor women's living conditions at a collective level often end up as intrusive, moralizing, and punitive direction of their lives" (Kirkland 464). Worcester reiterates these issues, suggesting that those of a lower socio-economic status are less healthy and ill-informed, which explains their bad food choices (493). This picks up on Perkins Gilman's critique that poor and "racially inferior" women are not properly informed on nutrition science to make good decisions for their families and thus the nation's progress. This account, Kirkland argues, reinscribes the idea that elite white women make individual *choices* that "free themselves" from their food environments, while poor women are structurally *determined* as a group by their environments (466). Note the title of Worcester's piece, "The Obesity of the Food Industry," it is sufficient to critique the food industry to identify it as "obese." This opens the way for neoliberal conceptions of *feminist* personal responsibility for self-improvement (Rodier and Meagher), specifically in this case, "proper" food consumption habits. While focusing on structures can be progressive (not individually blaming oppressed women for participation in unjust systems), the environmental account of "obesity" affirms not only an ad hoc standard for who is a true agent, it upholds a "thin saviour" or educated and elite white feminism. These and other arguments lead to concrete exclusions for fat people in certain feminist spaces, especially those that uphold a moralizing food activism, reiterating the stereotype that fat people eat mindlessly and don't care where their food comes from. From these tensions, it might be clear why critical discussions of fat do not figure into textbooks in areas on food, health, and healthcare.

Including fatness primarily in discussions of beauty culture tells us something about the discourses undergirding editorial decisions—that is, that scholars interpret fat as primarily about women's looks, even though fat lived experiences of oppression intersect so many other structural and material oppressions (healthcare, education, disability, careers, racialized violence, etc.).

The most common approach in WGS textbooks is to include discussions of size in sections on beauty culture. The only volume to include four relevant pieces, *Women: Images and Reality, A Multicultural Anthology* (Kelly et al. 2012) has a chapter on women's bodies and a subsection on "Female Beauty." The first piece is a lived experience of anorexia, detailing the harms of weight obsession and connecting that to limiting patriarchal beauty ideals. The second, "Revenge against the Scale" (Jenny Ollendorf) is also a lived experience of breaking free from weight obsession by destroying a scale. These two pieces discuss the connections between patriarchy and negative associations with the body that uphold a thin ideal. These discussions centre weight obsession's negative impacts, which are real, pervasive, and harmful. These harms are related but distinct from lived experience of a stigmatized size. After the two pieces on weight obsession, there are two poems, "The Fat Girl Rules the World" by July Siebecker (2002) and "Homage to My Hips" by Lucille Clifton (1976). Seibecker's piece harkens back to manifestas that affirm

the indomitable power of a rebellious girl. This piece uses "girl" as an unmarked neutral, offering a form of rebellion for a fat (white) *girl*. The poem discusses taking up space as holding power, but aligns this also with *eating a lot of food*. In the piece, fat girls have a "voracious will" and an "unrepenting appetite." The piece appears to use fat girl as a *metaphor* for unruliness that lives within the presumed reader. Clifton's piece is a celebration of sexuality, specifically the sexuality of her hips from a Black woman's perspective. These two pieces are notably different. In "The Fat Girl Rules the World," there's a sense of fat girls have lost their power, but they need to find it and embrace the unruly fat girl. In "Homage to my Hips," Clifton is embracing her bigger hips, mentioning they "don't fit into little petty places." Her Black womanhood is part of this poem: "these hips have never been enslaved, they go where they want to go" (136). In both cases, the idea is that being bigger and taking up space is a way to challenge restrictive norms of white femininity. In Seibecker's piece especially, there's a thin line between challenging restrictive femininity and repudiating femininity (Hoskin), bordering on the trope of the unruly fat woman who hates "skinny bitches." Metaphorically aligning fat embodiment as *necessarily resisting* norms of femininity promotes the idea that femininity cannot be inhabited at a larger size, again stereotyping the fat woman outside of femininity, hating beautiful women for fitting the norm. These four pieces work together to locate issues of size in critiques of beauty norms for being overly restrictive. In this schematization, then, feminist work is to expand beauty norms so that more kinds of bodies are also beautiful.

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Perhaps the most ambivalent textbook inclusion is in Shaw and Lee's *Women's Voices, Feminist Visions* (2011). Under the header, "Inscribing Gender on the Body: Bodies, Nature, and Women" and flanked by articles on cosmetic surgery, "Love Your Fat Self" by Courtney Martin is the sole piece on fat (2007). This is an excerpt from her book *Perfect Girls, Starving Daughters: The Frightening New Normalcy of Hating Your Body* (2007). Martin's book is squarely in the tradition of Wolf, Brumberg, and others, but this piece stands apart because it directly engages fat politics. It is not immediately obvious from the beginning of the piece that the writer is narrativizing the experience of her fat *friend*. The piece is the author's elaboration on a spoken word piece by a fat woman named "Gareth." Martin's size is not mentioned in the piece (but might be in her book), demonstrating a lack of positioning in relation to Gareth. It is an extractive approach to the lived experience of a fat person, reinforcing the troubling idea that one obtains license to speak to an oppression if they have a friend in that group, equalizing again between the harms of weight obsession and harms of living a stigmatized size. Martin describes Gareth: "On paper, she is the perfect girl." This move both names an adult as a *girl* and enforces a distinction between the body and the mind ("on paper"). Martin's piece is defensive of her friend, attempting to humanize her by arguing she is a good member of society and giving multifaceted reasons for her fatness, belying the violent structural reasons for fat oppression. She writes:

> Gareth is fat because she has a genetic predisposition to fat, because she grew up with a father who sells chocolate for a living and often showed his affection through tarts and candy bars, because her mother—however well-intentioned she was—restricted Gareth's food and, as a result, made love feel conditional. She is fat because she is fascinated by food, generously cooks for others, and enjoys a good hamburger. She is fat because she refuses to live a watered-down life—cutting out carbs or sugars or meat, becoming one of those difficult dinner guests or boring picnic companions—so that she can be thin. She is fat because, like so many of the rest of us, she sometimes uses food to fill an emotional void. She is fat because she lives in an age when advertising preys on every potential craving, insecurity, and discomfort. (n.p.)

The emphasis and selection of these individual reasons demonstrates the stereotypes of fat women the author is arguing *against* at the same time as *reinforcing*. The relationship to food is central, creating a picture of Gareth as a fat nurturer who comforts herself and others with

food, and at the same time she is determined by her food environment. It instrumentalizes her body as evidence of her refusal to live a "watered-down" life, similar to the "unruly fat girl" reading feminist resistance as refusing to diet to be thin. It is a form of "fatspiration"—if she can love *herself* at her (grotesque) size, then we should all be a bit easier on ourselves (in our individual self-concepts).

While centred on beauty, Martin's piece engages feminist approaches to health studies. She criticizes the idea that fat is *necessarily* unhealthy at the same time as reiterating uncited claims that everyone is getting fatter and thus unhealthier. Martin's piece decouples fat politics from disability, claiming that "obesity" is justifiably feared, but *only* for the health risks it poses, not the "inner qualities" a person might have, like being lazy or uncaring, thus shifting the "good health imperative" to mental health. The piece mobilizes the cliché of "X is the last remaining socially acceptable prejudice" about fat prejudice.[1] The piece reiterates a projected anger and hostility that fat women have towards thin women, mocking women who live "small" lives by obsessing over their weight, eating carrot sticks, missing the potential for radical empathies across differences of embodied experiences of fat negativity. This displaces anger at fat oppression onto thin women, critiquing the *incorporation* of the thin ideal. It takes this to another metaphorical *reductio*, arguing that fat *experience* is an individual "state of mind":

> But even those precious few who get to this someday destination aren't happy or better. If you live fat in your head, then you are fat. If you believe you are unattractive, you will experience the world as an unattractive woman. If you hound yourself about everything you put in your mouth, you won't enjoy eating. Regardless of the number on the scale, if the number inside your head is large, insurmountable, and loaded with meaning, then you will feel weighed down by its implications. (n.p.)

This leads to the contradictions for the reader, since if fat (read: negative self-conception) is in your head, are we to "think thin" or "love [our] fat sel[ves]"? This individualizes approaches to resisting oppression, and instead locates them in neoliberal self-improvement disciplinary regimes.

Martin is not reflexive about her relationship with Gareth, nor about the extractive politics of writing about a fat friend. Nearing the end, the reader realizes that the author is writing from the position of watching Gareth perform a spoken word piece, and she quotes Gareth:

> It's like, at this point, we all know that the media, old white men, corporations, the fashion industry, and all sorts of bad people or things out there shape the way we view ourselves and others. Okay, I get it. But don't you think, at some point, knowing all this, we should start taking some responsibility for our thoughts and words? I mean, isn't that the point of all this higher education, all this enlightenment? (n.p.)

This analysis of feminist agency then prescribes education, literally citing enlightenment rationality where the truth will set you (the individual) free from nasty "fat feelings," completing Bordo's binary of "dupes" or "free wills." This both individualizes and responsibilizes anyone who speaks out about fat oppression—they need to just let it go.

Hearing Gareth mobilize the feminist critique of the advertising industry situates her within that tradition, backing off a critical fat politics and locating the problem in our "duped" false consciousnesses (Bordo). While individual self-awareness is a condition of possibility for collective resistance, it is not sufficient. Gareth is trying to pierce the belief that if we are thin we will be happy, when those with fat experience know that if you are thin, you aren't happy, but you are not subject to fat oppression. This analysis of feminist agency then prescribes education, literally citing enlightenment rationality where the truth will set you (the individual) free from nasty "fat feelings," completing Bordo's binary of "dupes" or "free wills." This both individualizes and responsibilizes anyone who speaks out about fat oppression—they need to just *let it go*. Martin suggests that we "look at every woman purposefully and lovingly—as if she were my mother or my best friend. It is breathtaking how beautiful they all are when I see them like this" (268). This, again, encapsulates fat into a looks-based oppression where incorporation into beauty will set you free.

Inclusions

Two texts, *Feminisms and Womanisms: A Women's Studies Reader* (Price et al.) and *Gender and Women's Studies in Canada: Critical Terrain* (Hobbs and Rice) include a piece by Kathleen LeBesco, who figures prominently in fat studies, potentially the area's most widely cited scholar. Her brief piece "Fat and Fabulous: Resisting Constructions of Female Body Ideals" is a sort of "reader's digest" version of how cultural forces come together to malign fat bodies and suggests that regardless of *why* a person is fat, they are deserving of respect. The piece introduces fat activism as a justice struggle with roots in the fat underground, suggesting that fat positivity and fat activism have important responses to media ideals. The piece ends on but does not discuss in detail the claim that "I believe that we need to encourage women to inhabit their bodies comfortably, whatever their size and shape, and to understand that it doesn't really matter how a body got to be the way it is for it to be respected" (LeBesco 249). This point here might be the "fat studies turn." Can we assert that no matter how a body got to be the way that it is, that it is valuable? And can we see that valuing as part of a political resistance with intersectional punch?

Feminist Frontiers (Taylor et al. (eds) 2011) includes a widely taught article, "Feminist Consumerism and Fat Activists: A Comparative Study of Grassroots Activism and the Dove Real Beauty Campaign" by Josée Johnston and Judy Taylor (2008). The paper follows a piece on cosmetic surgery, thus situating their analysis of fat activism within a critique of the "harms" of a sexist beauty culture. The paper contrasts emancipatory rhetoric and tactics within the Dove Real Beauty Campaign with that of a Toronto-based fat-activist collective Pretty, Porky, and Pissed Off (PPPO). The article has "oppressive feminine beauty standards" as the target of the critique and analysis (943), which subsumes the radical work of PPPO as a "critique of beauty" situated within feminist political activism. Further, the piece cites important writers at the time in fat studies but labels this research as "corpulence studies" (945), a phrase that either lived for a short time or was initiated by the authors. While Dove's campaign tries to promote beauty as a good for *all*, this belies how beauty norms still function to reward and punish. Dove refuses to challenge the idea of beauty as essential to women's personhood (954). This piece critiques Dove for demanding that women "feel beautiful" irrespective of social messages, and critiques the mind/body dualism this implies (955). This is contrasted in the piece by the work of fat activists (PPPO) who "waged war" with hegemonic beauty standards, critiquing the system of valuing bodies on the basis of their conformity with beauty whatsoever (957). The article treats fat oppression as sexism extended by both framing it with a piece on cosmetic surgery, and by subsuming the ground breaking fat activist collective (PPPO) within a feminist activist contrast to Dove's campaign.

New Selections

Carving out pathways for my own teaching was difficult given the affective weight of stigma associated with critical fat politics and scholarship. I did not teach introduction to WGS with texts, but always created my own reading lists. I began introducing critical work in this area by turning to Susan Bordo's landmark *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (1993). Sections of this work continue to be taught widely to discuss the impact of the media on self-esteem. I would teach "Hunger as Ideology" to address specifically how advertising reproduces cultural norms to be thin, thus severing our natural desire and needs for food. Bordo's text stood out, in my mind, because it specifically addresses women's agency in relation to beauty norms—neither "dupes" nor "free spirits," both of which are interpretations that crop up in discussions of beauty norms. Bordo's work, however, in its focus on eating and thinness obsession (and use of "obesity" as a label for compulsive eating), is limited from a fat studies perspective since it does not address the experiences of fat bodies as objects of systemic social derision. I continue to see the value in Bordo's work, since like many others, my own critical teaching of fat studies grew out of feminist critique of beauty culture and philosophical interest in feminist agency in resisting oppression.

Like many others using a digital reading room on their syllabi, I began to draw on articles from another landmark volume, *The Fat Studies Reader* (2009). The reader includes articles largely from the fat studies scholarly community, but also high profile activists, bloggers, as well as important historical documents for fat studies such as the "Fat Liberation Manifesto" by Judy Freespirit and Adlebaran (1973). I would teach the introduction to the Health at Every Size movement (Bacon), an "Invitation to Revolution" by Marilyn Wann, and Tracy Royce's "The Shape of Abuse: Fat Oppression as a Form of Violence Against Women." These three pieces together demonstrate alternative frameworks for understanding bodily values, but also that fat studies has real and specific application in WGS scholarship, given the ways in which fatphobia compounds intimate partner violence (Royce), health*care* disparities (Bacon), and bodily shame (Wann), all central organizing concerns for feminist political work.

I have had fruitful teaching experiences when I address the uses of fat within feminist politics from a historical

perspective. In Amy Farrell's book *Fat Shame: Stigma and the Fat Body in American Culture* (2011), her chapter "Feminism, Citizenship and Fat Stigma" discusses how eugenic bodily hierarchies were reiterated in feminist and *anti*-feminist political cartoons at the time of North-American Anglo white women's suffrage. This particular chapter demonstrates how *both sides of suffrage* represented their opponents as fat as a shorthand for unfit, abnormal, and primitive, thus unable to carry the white colonial nation into the liberal progressive future. Pro-suffrage opponents represented themselves as thin and thus *feminine*—assuring the public that women will still be desirable *even if* they get the vote. This was paired with representations of older fat and sour-faced women "holding back" progress. Anti-suffrage proponents did almost the exact opposite, surfacing eugenic impulses even more explicitly. Pro-suffrage proponents were represented as manly, evolutionary atavisms–they were drawn with a stereotypical but legibly Black embodiment mirroring blackface caricatures and stigmatized images of the "Venus Hottentot." Farrell provides an entry point for not only how North American Anglo white women's suffrage was a race-making project through and through, but how representations of the body are central in political organizing. Teaching from *Fat Shame* offers opportunities for complex critical thinking about feminist politics as its own disciplining force, and a way of understanding the intersectional genealogy of contemporary fat stigmas.

Newer resources are emerging that intersect fatness with disability, race, and transness. Notably, Da'Shaun L. Harrison's *Belly of the Beast: The Politics of Anti-Fatness as Anti-Blackness* (2021) and Sabrina String's *Fearing the Black Body: The Racial Origins of Fat Phobia* (2019) are important critical race interventions into fat studies. Harrison's analysis of racialized police brutality in the United States demonstrates how victims' fatness compounds being perceived as "animalistic" and "aggressive" and at the same time, their fatness is used to blame the victim, since their fat marks them as inherently sick and near death, thus the police defense attorneys can argue reasonable doubt on cause of death at the same time as self-defense. String's analysis builds on and departs from Farrell's work, demonstrating more specifically the origins of fat phobia in the transatlantic slave trade, detailing how European beauty ideals (read as morphology and also fat accumulations and lack thereof) were mobilized to justify the "savagery" and racial inferiority of Africans. There is teachable work bringing together disability and fat (Mollow; Herndon) and also transness and fat (Ray White). These works make it clear that fat is not only an important social justice issue, but that it is fundamentally embedded in intersectional structures of oppression.

Conclusion

None of what I have covered here about WGS textbooks should be understood as saying that bringing fat studies perspectives into any classroom is going to be easy. This is confirmed in a lot of the literature that is surfacing on the project of teaching fat studies (Boling; Watkins et. al.; Koppleman; Escalera; Fisanick; Guthman). These articles discuss teaching fat studies courses, teaching while fat, and bringing in critical perspectives on the "obesity epidemic" in courses. Being fat in academia is its own difficult position, which is starting to be discussed (Cooks; Benton; Reidinger; Mann; Rodier and Brennan). An excellent first-person narrative of normative size, gender, and racial embodiment for a junior Black faculty member is Kiese Laymon's *Heavy: An American Memoir* (2018). First-person accounts and scholarly articles demonstrate the difficult position of having a non-normative body and how that affects academic credibility, tenure and promotion, and student perceptions of learning, etc. So, it is important to approach one's embodied position in the classroom, understanding the burden it places on non-normative bodied people to teach to their stigmas. Julie Guthman's article outlines how student prejudice against fat people (both as subjects of learning and fat-bodied teachers) affects learning, using student comments to unpack dominant diet and weight loss ideology. I have personally been accused of bias on the basis of my body, and had students walk out of a WGS class on fat studies, saying that they won't listen to anything that says being fat is OK. Writing on teaching as a fat person, and teaching specifically about fat as a fat person, needs to be better understood in our pedagogical reflexivity. While thin allies are crucial to the fat justice movement, fat studies needs to become more self-reflexive, since many of the texts even I recommend and teach are not written by fat-bodied scholars.

While creating edited volumes and textbooks is largely thankless work in academia, it is also a crucial field-shaping endeavour. With that in mind, collaborating on edited volumes, especially in WGS, is more important than ever. Here I have zeroed in on fat in ways that I hope illuminate other framing issues in the discipline. For example, how have section headings organized central questions and issues in the discipline? One outcome I hope to have highlighted is that the question is not just about inclusion, but about how pieces are framed and the terms of the inclusion. For example, including *singular* pieces on fat risks portraying fat politics as a singular and homogeneous alignment and fat-bodiedness as a unified experience. In addition, subsuming body size into discussions of eating disorders perpetuates the confusion between weight *obsession* (self-conscious/body shame/fear of fat) and *fat*

oppression, which may include those things, but crucially must involve material embodiment and discrimination specifically on *the basis of that material embodiment* (for a discussion of this in terms of sexual violence against fat women, see (Rodier)). This distinction carries the ability to extricate discussions of fat from white supremacist diet culture and leverage it into an intersectional critique of bodily hierarchies, eugenics, the transatlantic slave trade, gender, and disability. This has implications for theories of resistance politics, since including fatness primarily within discussions of beauty culture can be read as wanting those beauty ideals to stretch to include bigger bodies so we all get to *feel beautiful* (keeping those hierarchies in place). This reduces the struggle against fatphobia as a looks-based issue of social inclusion issue rather than one of structural violence, health*care* disparities, social exclusion and stigma, racialized police brutality, and gender-based violence.

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Endnotes

[1] The claim that something is the "last remaining socially acceptable prejudice" is usually revealing of one's social location and their perspective on oppression. It is a generality that cannot help but be false given how it invokes "social acceptability," which is always heterogeneous and contextual. It is analytically false given that oppression is always already intersectional (thus there is no single "last" of anything). Often it is used to talk about whether or not there is wide-ranging consciousness that something qualifies as an oppression, and in that way, it could describe fat oppression, but only does so in a single-axis, ahistorical way. In attempting to shore up support for fat people, this phrase is instead, quite damaging.